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RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 2025
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 1447
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RUEHC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 000574

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, OES/IHB, AIAG, MED
STATE PASS TO AID
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HHS PASS TO CDC
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PREL, PINR, AMGT, TF, KU
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON H1N1 CASES AMONG U.S. MILITARY IN KUWAIT

REF: A. KUWAIT 530
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 515
[1](#)C. KUWAIT 498
[1](#)D. KUWAIT 455

Classified By: DCM Alan Misenheimer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) During an introductory meeting with the new Minister of Health, Dr. Hilal Musaed Al-Sayer, Ambassador provided an update on the status of H1N1 influenza cases among U.S. military transiting through Kuwait and informed the Minister that the USG would likely notify the WHO of additional cases this week. Noting the Ministry's swift moves to forestall panic when a U.S. newspaper made public 18 cases last month, Ambassador and Minister Al-Sayer agreed on the need for carefully managing the release of news of the 51 additional cases. (Note: Army Central Command in Kuwait (ARCENT) has informed the Embassy of 51 additional confirmed cases in the past two weeks, resulting in a total of 69 confirmed cases among U.S. military personnel transiting via Kuwait. To date, local and international media have only reported on the 18 cases made public on May 23. End Note).

EMBASSY-MINISTRY COOPERATION PRAISED

[1](#)2. (C) Responding to Ambassador's words of praise for the professionalism of the Ministry's senior staff, Minister Al-Sayer lauded the cooperation between the Embassy and his Ministry. He said that senior Ministry officials had been impressed with their visits to medical facilities at Camp Arifjan, Camp Buehring and the Embassy. Noting that GOK and USG health authorities have different procedures in place for administering Tamiflu or other antiviral medications to affected and suspected individuals, the Minister said he was nevertheless satisfied with ARCENT's procedures for isolating and treating suspected and confirmed cases. (Note: the GOK has a policy of prescribing Tamiflu to all suspected and confirmed cases, as well as to others who may have come into recent contact with such cases. End Note). Ambassador also urged the GOK -- which is reportedly procuring 2,000,000 additional doses of Tamiflu -- to bear in mind the intellectual property rights of the Tamiflu patent holder, California-based Gilead Sciences, Inc., and its international distribution partners. (Note: sources have told Post that three of five companies bidding are not licensed to produce Tamiflu. End Note).

JOINT AIRPORT SCREENING

13. (C) Ambassador stated that almost all of the 69 affected individuals have recovered and left Kuwait and that only three individuals are currently in isolation, of which only one soldier is confirmed with H1N1 flu. Ambassador emphasized that joint GOK-USG screening of U.S. military personnel flying into Abdullah Al-Mubarak airbase has been in place since May 29, with more than 7,000 troops screened with no suspected cases. Ambassador also noted that the U.S. military is proactively screening troops before they travel overseas, which the Minister said he was very pleased to hear.

14. (SBU) The Minister also said he welcomed enhanced cooperation between the Kuwait healthcare sector and U.S. and international health institutions. Separately, while praising President Obama's Cairo speech as "historic" and "fantastic," he said it was a shame that the President did not reference Kuwait's recent parliamentary elections, not least the election of four women to the National Assembly.

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JONES